

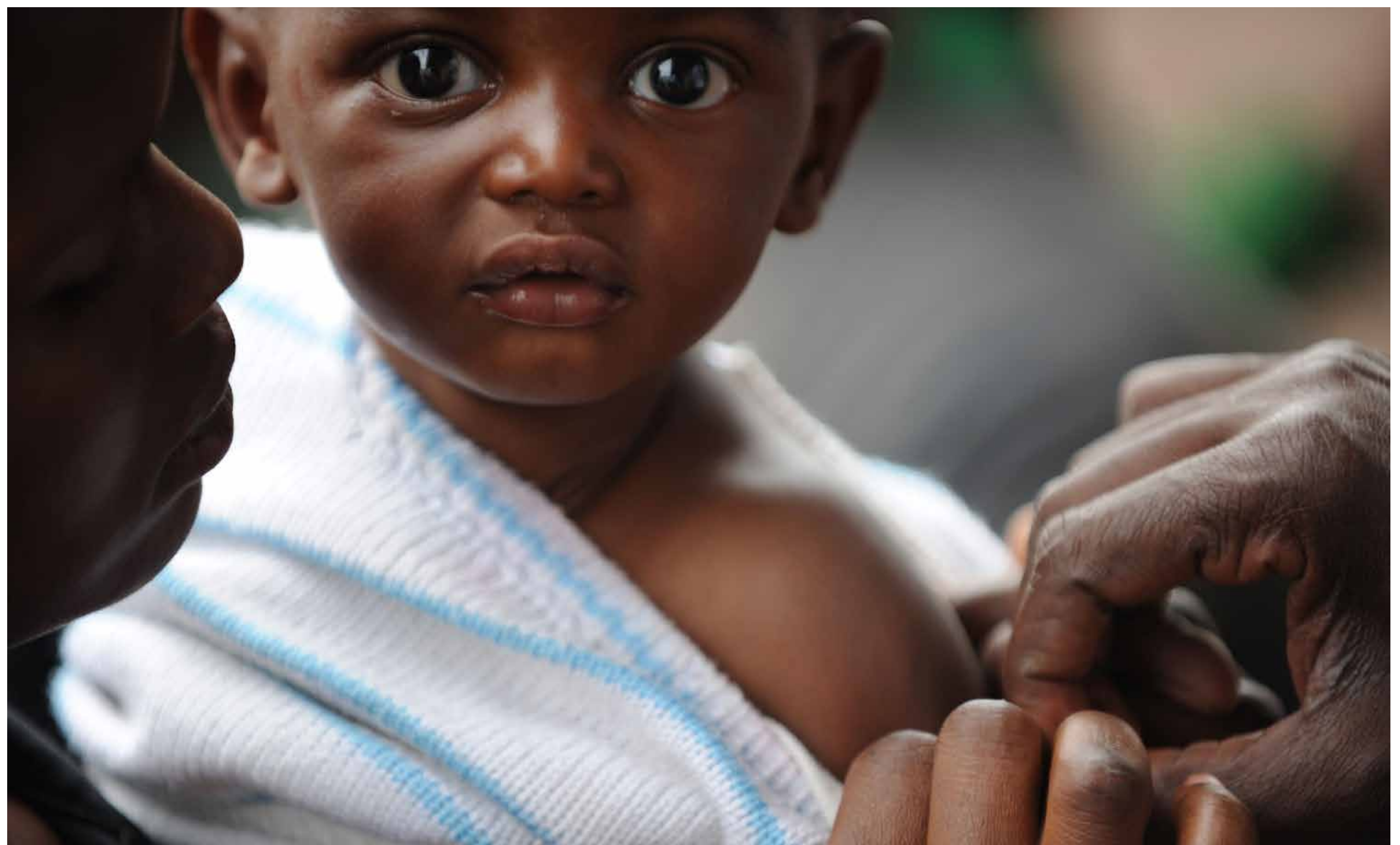
THE ART OF RESEARCH

Low vaccination coverage hampers child health efforts

Investment in the health information system and improved access to vaccinations are needed to advance efforts for universal health coverage.



Heather Fraser is a researcher in economic evaluation, implementation science and vaccines at PRICELESS SA.



Better vaccination coverage is needed for universal health coverage.

South African children are facing the scourge of preventable diseases. We all want our children to have the best chance at leading healthy lives; however, far too many are falling victim to severe illnesses such as measles and rotavirus.

Vaccination is proven to be the most successful strategy for combating these diseases. However, inadequate vaccination coverage persists, leaving our children vulnerable.

Research in Tshwane District into the factors that influence vaccine coverage has shown that the main barriers do not lie with

the procurement and delivery of vaccines. Rather, the system has higher level barriers, particularly an inadequate health information system.

A robust system is required – one which allows programme managers to identify where vaccination gaps occur, provide a platform to address challenges and improve access to vaccination services.

“Significant investment is required from the National Department of Health to ensure that clinics have the capacity to collect good quality data,” says Heather Fraser. “Strategies such

as defaulter-tracing registers would help clinics identify children who require vaccinations, and mobile clinics may improve access to this vital public health intervention.”

The implementation of National Health Insurance relies on interventions that prevent disease and promote health. This will rely heavily on stronger systems for improving vaccine coverage.

“If we do not address these gaps, the burden that these diseases place on the healthcare system will continue to grow, creating further barriers in our quest to achieve universal healthcare in South Africa.



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